PITTA

Newsletter of Deccan Birders (formerly Birdwatchers' Society of Andhra Pradesh)
New Series Volume 22 Number 12 November 2025

FIELD TRIP-1: Sunday, November 02, 2025, 7.00AM: Anna Sagar Lake, Jogipet. Meeting Point(s): Mangatrai Pearls, Punjagutta, 05:45AM; Taj Dhaba, Muthangi, 06:15AM. Coordinator(s): Srikanth Bhamidipati (Mobile: 97388-40070)

Nestled near the Andole Jogipet area of Sangareddy District, Anna Sagar Lake is a scenic freshwater haven and a birding hotspot boasting 200+ species throughout the year. During winter, the lake transforms into a lively avian airport: Flamingos glide in gracefully, Avocets sweep the shallows, and Godwits probe the mudflats like professional foragers. Add in a chorus of ducks, sandpipers, stilts, and the occasional surprise migrant, and you have a birder's paradise. The lake's wide open basin, bordered by farmlands and gentle hills, makes for great viewing and photography.

FIELD TRIP-2: Sunday, November 30, 2025, 6.00AM: Yenkathala Grasslands, Mominpet. Meeting Point(s): Mangatrai Pearls, Punjagutta, 05:00AM; Taj Dhaba, Muthangi, 05:30AM. Coordinator(s): Sudhir Moorti (Mobile: 89776-13055)

Mominpet represents a unique and valuable ecosystem, characterized by a diverse mix of habitats including dense shrubs, sprawling grasslands, and a vital lake. This ecological diversity ensures a phenomenal birding experience, offering glimpses of species across various ecological niches. Watch out for some spectacular avian residents and visitors, including raptors like Harriers and Eagles; ground birds like Chestnut-bellied Sandgrouse, Rain Quail, Jungle Bush Quail, Rock Bush Quail, Barred Buttonquail and Painted Francolin; and forest and open country species like Black-headed Cuckooshrike, Tree Pipit, and Baya Weaver.

Both trips will be half-day trips, so carry adequate water and breakfast/snacks, and protective gear if required. Covid protocols will be followed; please ensure you wear masks, carry a sanitiser and maintain social distancing. Non-members are most welcome; however, they are requested to contribute Rs. 100/- per person to the Deccan Birders kitty. New Deccan Birders hats and caps will be available for purchase; please carry adequate cash.

SOJOURN FOR THE SABINE – AND OTHER SPLENDID SPECTACLES
Trip Report: Nalsarovar, Gujarat, June 04-06, 2025

Text & Photos: Umesh Mani

Sabine's Gull

There comes a time in the life of every birder, when he decides that enough is enough, and now he HAS to go birding. In fact, of late this sort of time seems to come more and more often, but that is another matter.

One such episode hit me a couple of months back. We had just shifted back to our apartment, and all the incomplete tasks were driving me up the wall. Add to that the Chennai heat, some health issues in the family, and the fact that I had had to drop out of a long-awaited trip to Munsiyari – to cut a long story short, I was desperate to get out, even if it was just a couple of days.

Fortuitously, right at this time came the reports of a Sabine's Gull being sighted at Nalsarovar in Gujarat. This was apparently only the second time that this bird had been seen in India, the last being a record from Kerala in 2012. So obviously, it was extremely rare in India. And Nalsarovar is easy to get to, being just a 1.5 hour drive from Ahmedabad.

So the call was made, tickets were booked, and off I went.

Just for the record, in all my 20 years of birding, never once have I gone after – or 'twitched', in birder's parlance – a single species like this. Locally, sure, but never out of town. So it was quite an uncharacteristic thing for me. Some friends, in fact, thought that I was going for some other purpose and just not telling them the truth!

Anyway. Reaching Ahmedabad in the afternoon, I drove straight to Nalsarovar and met up with the guide. With vagrant bird sightings like this, it is not just the mystery of how it landed up here – there is also the uncertainty of how long it will stay! After all, it may very well decide to move somewhere else at any moment. And in this case, the Sabine's Gull had been around for a week to ten days already. Hence, the guide was also a little jittery, and told me that we should go straight to Nalsarovar Lake and at least see the bird once – he did not even give me the time for a cup of tea! But I appreciated his keenness to ensure I did not miss the bird, so we drove directly to Nalsarovar Lake.

And there it was!

When I reached there, around 4:00PM, it was sitting on a small rock in the water, about 20-25m away from the lake shore. After seeing it through the binoculars, and taking a few record shots, we relaxed. It was quite a thrill, to be honest, to see one of the rarest birds reported from India – only the second time, as I mentioned earlier.

There were a few other birders also there, all waiting for a better view. I was informed by the guide that nearly a hundred people had visited Nalsarovar in the past few days to see this bird, and that the bird was nevertheless very cooperative, possibly used to human presence back wherever it came from. Also, that it seemed to be sticking to one small area – the rock I mentioned earlier, the waters near the rock, and a small patch of lake shore – it seemed to be shuttling between just these places. That naturally made it easier for everyone to see and photograph the bird.

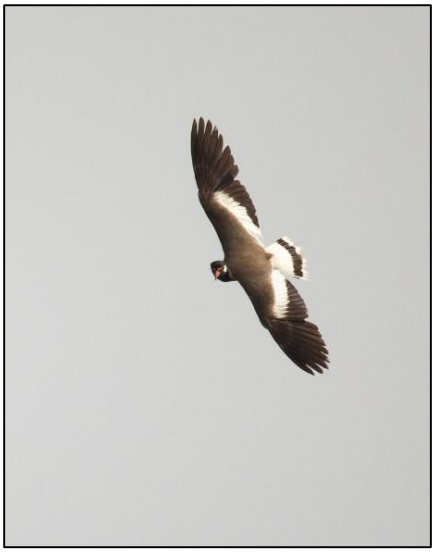
I settled down to wait, hoping that the bird would grant me a closer audience. Within a few minutes, my wish came true! Taking off from the rock and making a few lazy circles in the air, it came and landed in the water pretty close to where I was sitting and, a minute later, walked out of the water on to the shore.

Sabine's Gull

It walked around, unconcerned by the 8-10 people who were sitting around – or lying around! – waiting for closer photographs. After about 20 minutes, it suddenly took off, possibly startled by a stray dog that had wandered up there. But it came back soon enough, giving more photo ops.

Whiskered Tern

Marsh Sandpiper



Red-wattled Lapwing

While waiting, I took a look around for other birds, and saw a few: a couple of Whiskered Terns, a foraging Marsh Sandpiper, a Red-wattled Lapwing randomly flying around, a few Little Grebes in breeding finery, and a few Black-winged Stilts.

Little Grebe in breeding plumage

Non-breeding Little Grebe

Black-winged Stilt with catch

Alongside them was a whole bunch of Egrets, comprising of Little, Medium and a lone Western Reef Egret with a few Black-headed Ibises.

Mixed flock of Medium, Little and Western Reef Egrets with Black-headed Ibis

The Egrets foraged in the water, picking up some morsels, as did the Sandpiper. One of the Little Egrets strutted around, seeming particularly proud of his breeding plumage!

Little Egret in breeding plumage

A flock of around 20 Glossy Ibises flew past in the distance. There was also a Blue-tailed Bee-eater in non-breeding plumage which turned out to be actually a Green Bee-eater with some marked blue wash on its underparts!

Green Bee-eater

The Sabine's Gull came back to shore, and I spent some time watching and photographing it. Although predominantly black, white and grey like most Gulls, it IS a beautiful bird. The black bill has a striking yellow tip, which really stood out against the blue of the water and the green of the grass.

Sabine's Gull with catch

Suddenly, I noticed a big black-and-white bird come flying across – a Woolly-necked Stork. It was nice to see this bird, because we don't really see them too often – but imagine my excitement when I realized that it was actually a group of 4 of them!

Woolly-necked Stork

A small group of Black-headed Ibises, including a couple of juveniles, joined the Egrets, foraging near a bunch of beached fishing boats – presumably there were enough fingerlings discarded by the fishermen for the birds to feed on at that spot.

Grey Heron

Western Reef Egret

Glossy Ibis flock

A Grey Heron, a Western Reef Egret and another large group of Glossy Ibises flew past, reminding me that roosting time was approaching. We therefore, decided to wind up and move back for a badly needed cup of tea, and then on to the hotel.

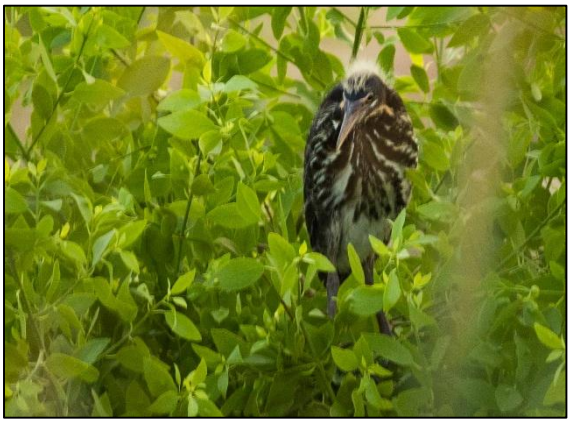
Day-2

We had decided to come back to the Sabine's Gull for another look in morning light – but there was some other birding to be done first. Accordingly, we made an early start and went to a spot that had a lot of reeds. The guide had told me, "Yahan par Bittern milta hai".

That turned out to be the understatement of the trip – in the next half hour, we saw 6 Yellow Bitterns (including one juvenile), 2 Cinnamon Bitterns and 3 Black Bitterns (including a juvenile)!

Yellow Bittern juvenile

Cinnamon Bittern



Black Bittern juvenile

Black Bittern

Other notable sightings were a Clamorous Reed Warbler with a catch, two beautiful Black-breasted Weavers, and an overflying Eurasian Spoonbill.

Clamorous Reed Warbler

Black-breasted Weaver

After that, it was time to head to the lake. En route, we saw a few Jungle Babblers squabbling, and a few birds on the wires – a couple of Pied Kingfishers, an Indian Roller, a few Green Bee-eaters, and so on.

At the lake, the Sabine's Gull was there, nicely settled on the rock, and so were about 20 birders/photographers on the shore. Like yesterday, the Gull made a few warm-up flights and went back to the rock a few times, before finally deciding to come to this side of the shore. As the Gull foraged around and had its fill, so did the shutterbugs.

River Tern

Pied Kingfisher

Besides the Sabine's Gull, many of the birds seen yesterday were still around – Woolly-necked Stork, Little and Medium Egrets, Pied Kingfishers – and one addition to the list, a River Tern. We don't get them very often around Chennai, so I enjoyed watching it as it wheeled around for a few seconds before moving on. The Little Egrets showed off their fishing skills, and a Pheasant-tailed Jacana in flight also made for a nice sight.

Pheasant-tailed Jacana

I now wanted to catch some birding outside the lake area – and some breakfast! – so we started off. The grassy areas around the lake gave close-up views of some common species – Eurasian Collared Dove, Ashy-crowned Sparrowlark, Red-naped Ibis and so on.

Eurasian Collared Dove

Red-naped Ibis

Black-winged Stilt chick

Outside, at a patch of water, we saw a Black-winged Stilt chick walking around alone. Just as we were wondering why it was alone, one parent turned up – and flew off again, chasing away a Red-wattled Lapwing that ventured too close. Over the next few minutes, we saw the Stilt parent do this repeatedly. How tough it must be to constantly stay alert to such threats!

Back near the sanctuary entrance, the guide told us about another patch that had some terns. We decided to go and take a look. This involved a 1-1.5km walk in the hot sun over burning sand, and a short walk through a slushy pond. Nevertheless, the guide assured us that it would be worth it.

Purple Heron immature

Little and Indian Cormorants

And was it! The first thing we saw, besides a couple of breeding Pheasant-tailed Jacanas and an immature Purple Heron, was a bare tree packed with around 50 Little & Indian Cormorants, followed immediately by a flock of around 200 Greater Flamingos.

Greater Flamingo

We saw a Kentish Plover nest with 3 eggs inside and the parents nowhere in sight, but we moved on quickly nevertheless.

River Tern juvenile

The first sandbar held 20-odd River Terns, mostly in breeding plumage; around 30 Whiskered Terns, also in breeding plumage; and assorted Glossy Ibises, Painted Storks and Egrets. 3 Slender-billed Gulls were seen floating in the water.

River Tern with Whiskered and Little Terns

Slender-billed Gull

A pair of Little Terns engaged in courtship feeding – it was interesting to watch the male bring a small fish and delicately place it into the bill of the female.

Little Tern courtship feeding

A Collared Pratincole flew around and gave great views until it settled down and began to preen. And we finally saw the bird we had been waiting for – the White-winged Tern.

A White-winged Tern in full breeding plumage had been sighted from here recently, but unfortunately, it seemed to have moved away somewhere in the days prior, and no one had sighted it in the past couple of days – so we had to satisfy ourselves with a non-breeding individual. But it was a beautiful specimen, with the characteristic black stripe looping around its eye.

White-winged Tern

A Kentish Plover in breeding plumage was also interesting to see.

Kentish Plover in breeding plumage

Dancing Dropwing *Trithemis pallidinervis*

Indian Common Clubtail *Ictinogomphus rapax*

It had been a frenetic, action-packed period of 'Tern-ing', but after baking in the sun for an hour plus, we were ready to get back. Accordingly, we packed up, met the Flamingos and Cormorants again as we trudged back, and headed off to the hotel.

Sarus Crane

The evening session started only by 04:30PM, which I felt was quite late, but the guide assured me that there would be plenty of time to bird. The first bird we saw was a lone Sarus Crane, quietly foraging a few metres from the highway, and I wondered where its partner was. Right after that we saw a Woolly-necked Stork, again pretty close.

Woolly-necked Stork

Rufous-tailed Lark

As soon as we reached our target patch, we saw a pair of Rufous-tailed Larks. They kept foraging, unconcerned at our presence. After watching them for a few minutes, we moved ahead and came to a small pond which held a good number of Egrets. One, strangely, had its head stuck inside the water for so long that we started feeling maybe it was dead! After nearly a minute, however, it pulled its head out, leaving us wondering what it had been up to.

Little Egret

We moved ahead, and came upon a Chestnut-bellied Sandgrouse family – parents with 2 chicks. The chicks looked so different!

The guide informed me that many birds had just completed breeding for the season, and we were likely to see more birds with chicks. That kindled my anticipation!

Common Babbler

A Common Babbler inside a huge thorny bush presented a striking picture.

Chestnut-bellied Sandgrouse female with chick

We circled around to get a better view of the Sandgrouse family, and were able to get some photographs. It was wonderful to see how the chick would sidle and hide under the parent when they were nearby. But even otherwise, they would freeze, squat on the grass, and basically disappear! – if not for the sharp eyes of the guide, I wonder if I would have ever been able to locate the chicks at all.

Chestnut-bellied Sandgrouse chick

Just for the record, to avoid stressing out the birds, these photos were taken without getting down from the car, and from a safe distance with an 800mm lens!

There were many small groups of Ashy-crowned Sparrowlarks on the ground – we estimated at least 50 of them – and a Delicate Prinia sang with great vigour from a bush top.

Delicate Prinia

Another Chestnut-bellied Sandgrouse family had 3 chicks – this time, the chicks were bigger. We even saw one of them having a dust bath!

A Small Buttonquail popped out of a bush just as we were driving past it, and ambled around, did a wing stretch – all too close for me to focus! That was so frustrating – the only other time I had seen it earlier, many years back, it was for about 0.2 seconds as it flew across a path in a field!

Fortunately, it was comfortable walking around, and slowly moved into focusing range, so that I was able to get some photographs. A few minutes later, I realized that there was actually a pair!

Small Buttonquail female

Small Buttonquail male

Collared Pratincole adult

We watched them for a while as they went about foraging in the grass. Then we decided to move to another spot where the guide had earlier seen a bird with a chick – and as soon as we got there, there it was – a Collared Pratincole!

We knew the chick would be somewhere in the vicinity, so we refrained from going any closer. Scanning the ground through the binoculars for the chick proved in vain – all I could find was broken eggshells. But the guide, of course, was able to locate the chick, and pointed it out to me. So well was it camouflaged that even with his directions, it took me a while to spot it, scrunched down next to a small plant – a cute little ball of fluff.

Collared Pratincole chick

We were there for barely a minute, but the parent put on a display to distract us. I couldn't make up my mind whether it was a broken-wing display or a display of aggression, since the bird had both wings extended. Also, instead of moving away, it actually took a few steps *towards* us. This made me feel that it was probably an aggression display.

Collared Pratincole aggression display

To avoid stressing it out, we quickly moved away and around, and put some more distance between us. Parking a little further distance away, we switched off the vehicle and settled down to watch, hoping to see some parent-chick interaction. Unfortunately that did not happen – presumably the parent was still watchful – so we moved away from there.

We found another individual a little distance away, and were able to take a few good photographs. A little later, we spotted another chick crouched down on an open path – it probably saw us before we saw it!

By now, the light was beginning to fade, so we decided to wind up for the day. As we left, we saw a Paddyfield Pipit carrying what initially looked like a bagworm but later turned out to be some other insect, and a Red-necked Falcon sitting on a pylon – with a kill!

Day-3

We started the day with an excellent view of a Black Bittern followed by a juvenile Yellow Bittern, a pair of Black-breasted Weavers and a Striated Heron beautifully silhouetted against the rising sun.

Striated Heron

A juvenile Black Bittern was seen hiding amongst the reeds, another adult Black Bittern gave great views and a pair was briefly seen. Clearly, the Bitterns were thriving at this place.

Black Bittern juvenile

Greater Coucal

A handful of Black-breasted Weavers chased each other inside a bunch of reeds. In an adjacent field I saw a group of 4-5 Greater Coucals together, a very unusual sight. Unfortunately, by the time we could stop the car and find a gap in the bushes through which to photograph them, they had all but vanished.

Cattle Egret in breeding plumage

The commonest of birds, a Cattle Egret, looked beautiful in its breeding plumage, complete with pink bill base.

With not much time available today – I was to return to Chennai in the afternoon – we decided to go to an area where raptors were supposed to be seen quite often. We saw a juvenile Spiny-tailed Lizard peeping out of its burrow, and the guide told me that this area usually had plenty of these lizards, which is why many raptors liked to drop in here.

Spiny-tailed Lizard juvenile

We were not so lucky today, though – not a single raptor turned up. There were a few more of the Lizards though. So I kept busy looking for and trying to photograph them and, over the next couple of hours, managed to get some decent shots of the adult and juvenile Spiny-tailed Lizards.

Spiny-tailed Lizard adult

Grey Francolin family

There were a couple of interesting sidelights: A family of Grey Francolins, comprising two adults and five not-so-small chicks, ambled across. And an Indian Courser suddenly turned up and walked around for a while, giving us some excellent views, before taking off.

Indian Courser

White-eared Bulbul

Finally, around 09:30AM, we decided to start moving back. On the way we saw a couple of White-eared Bulbuls perched on a bush close to the road – strangely, a bird I had not photographed at all over the first 2 days.

Sarus Crane pair

Back on the highway, we spied a pair of Sarus Cranes foraging. Although we were running a little late, one cannot ignore the Sarus! – so we stopped to take a few photographs.

Suddenly, the male threw its head back, courtship style, and let out a loud call – and the female did the same! I am not sure how accurate this is, but I had been told that while both partners participate in the courtship dance, it is only the male that calls. So it seemed quite unusual to see the female also calling.

Anyway, that was it for the moment. What a way to close the trip! Keeping that in mind, I made my way back to the hotel and thence to the airport for my return flight. Though it had been a whirlwind couple of days, I was quite happy that I had managed to capture some really nice memories.

The list of birds seen during the trip:

Sl No	Species	Scientific name	Sl No	Species	Scientific name
1	Indian Peafowl	*Pavo cristatus*	11	Grey-headed Swamphen	*Porphyrio poliocephalus*
2	Grey Francolin	*Ortygornis pondicerianus*	12	White-breasted Waterhen	*Amaurornis phoenicurus*
3	Rock Pigeon (Feral Pigeon)	*Columba livia*	13	Sarus Crane	*Antigone antigone*
4	Eurasian Collared Dove	*Streptopelia decaocto*	14	Black-winged Stilt	*Himantopus himantopus*
5	Laughing Dove	*Spilopelia senegalensis*	15	Red-wattled Lapwing	*Vanellus indicus*
6	Chestnut-bellied Sandgrouse	*Pterocles exustus*	16	Kentish Plover	*Anarhynchus alexandrinus*
7	Greater Coucal	*Centropus sinensis*	17	Pheasant-tailed Jacana	*Hydrophasianus chirurgus*
8	Asian Koel	*Eudynamys scolopaceus*	18	Marsh Sandpiper	*Tringa stagnatilis*
9	Eurasian Moorhen	*Gallinula chloropus*	19	Small Buttonquail	*Turnix sylvaticus*
10	Eurasian Coot	*Fulica atra*	20	Indian Courser	*Cursorius coromandelicus*

Sl No	Species	Scientific name	Sl No	Species	Scientific name
21	Collared Pratincole	*Glareola pratincola*	53	Asian Green Bee-eater	*Merops orientalis*
22	Sabine's Gull	*Xema sabini*	54	Common Kingfisher	*Alcedo atthis*
23	Slender-billed Gull	*Chroicocephalus genei*	55	White-throated Kingfisher	*Halcyon smyrnensis*
24	Little Tern	*Sternula albifrons*	56	Pied Kingfisher	*Ceryle rudis*
25	Whiskered Tern	*Chlidonias hybrida*	57	Indian Roller	*Coracias benghalensis*
26	White-winged Tern	*Chlidonias leucopterus*	58	Red-necked Falcon	*Falco chicquera*
27	River Tern	*Sterna aurantia*	59	Black Drongo	*Dicrurus macrocercus*
28	Greater Flamingo	*Phoenicopterus roseus*	60	House Crow	*Corvus splendens*
29	Little Grebe	*Tachybaptus ruficollis*	61	Rufous-tailed Lark	*Ammomanes phoenicura*
30	Asian Openbill	*Anastomus oscitans*	62	Ashy-crowned Sparrow Lark	*Eremopterix griseus*
31	Asian Woolly-necked Stork	*Ciconia episcopus*	63	Crested Lark	*Galerida cristata*
32	Little Cormorant	*Microcarbo niger*	64	Common Tailorbird	*Orthotomus sutorius*
33	Indian Cormorant	*Phalacrocorax fuscicollis*	65	Delicate Prinia	*Prinia lepida*
34	Glossy Ibis	*Plegadis falcinellus*	66	Ashy Prinia	*Prinia socialis*
35	Black-headed Ibis	*Threskiornis melanocephalus*	67	Zitting Cisticola	*Cisticola juncidis*
36	Red-naped Ibis	*Pseudibis papillosa*	68	Clamorous Reed Warbler	*Acrocephalus stentoreus*
37	Eurasian Spoonbill	*Platalea leucorodia*	69	Wire-tailed Swallow	*Hirundo smithii*
38	Black Bittern	*Botaurus flavicollis*	70	Red-vented Bulbul	*Pycnonotus cafer*
39	Cinnamon Bittern	*Botaurus cinnamomeus*	71	White-eared Bulbul	*Pycnonotus leucotis*
40	Yellow Bittern	*Botaurus sinensis*	72	Jungle Babbler	*Argya striata*
41	Black-crowned Night Heron	*Nycticorax nycticorax*	73	Common Babbler	*Argya caudata*
42	Little Egret	*Egretta garzetta*	74	Common Myna	*Acridotheres tristis*
43	Western Reef Heron	*Egretta gularis*	75	Bank Myna	*Acridotheres ginginianus*
44	Little Heron	*Butorides atricapilla*	76	Indian Robin	*Copsychus fulicatus*
45	Indian Pond Heron	*Ardeola grayii*	77	Oriental Magpie Robin	*Copsychus saularis*
46	Eastern Cattle Egret	*Ardea coromanda*	78	Purple Sunbird	*Cinnyris asiaticus*
47	Great Egret	*Ardea alba*	79	Black-breasted Weaver	*Ploceus benghalensis*
48	Medium Egret	*Ardea intermedia*	80	Indian Silverbill	*Euodice malabarica*
49	Grey Heron	*Ardea cinerea*	81	Tricolored Munia	*Lonchura malacca*
50	Purple Heron	*Ardea purpurea*	82	House Sparrow	*Passer domesticus*
51	Black-winged Kite	*Elanus caeruleus*	83	Paddyfield Pipit	*Anthus rufulus*
52	Black Kite	*Milvus migrans*			

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A DAY OF RAW NATURE AND REVELATION
Trip Report: Yenkathala Grasslands, June 29, 2025

Text and Photos: Gokul Krishna Addanki

Indian Courser

Our June Deccan Birders outing, led by Srikanth B on Sunday, June 29, 2025, took us to the Yenkathala grasslands. It is a place that always holds such promise for birding, yet lately, it's also a poignant reminder of the relentless march of development, with mining and real estate interests encroaching on this vital habitat. This grassland, as our eBird checklists collectively show, is home to a remarkable close to 140 bird species[1], many of them grassland species whose very existence depends on these open spaces that are rapidly shrinking.

The morning began, as most birding days do, with a sense of anticipation. The weather was a mix of cloudy skies and welcome bursts of sun, with a hint of rain in the air – perfect for observation. Even before the dramatic events that unfolded, Yenkathala was already showing off. Among the other birds, we were particularly thrilled to spot multiple Indian Courser chicks, tiny bundles of camouflage, scuttling across the grass with their watchful adults nearby. We managed to get a few precious clicks of them.

Then, around 9:10 AM, as we were winding down our initial foray, something caught our eye. A House Crow was acting rather strangely, hopping around with something small in its beak. Both House Crows and Jungle Crows share this habitat, but the distinct size and coloration, clearly visible even from a distance, confirmed this was a House Crow.

House Crow with prey (Indian Nightjar chick)

What followed was quite a sight, and genuinely unsettling. The crow began toying with its catch, tossing it up in the air. My immediate thought was that it would tear the prey apart. But to my surprise, after a few tosses and twitches, it simply gulped the entire object whole. It was a moment of stunned silence for our group. We couldn't quite make out what the crow had consumed until, moments later, it suddenly shooed away an adult bird that flew up from the very spot.

House Crow with Indian Nightjar chick as the adult flies helplessly away

Looking back at the photo I managed to capture – the one showing the crow with its meal and that adult bird taking flight in the same frame – we realized, with a sad certainty, that it was an Indian Nightjar. The chick itself looked barely a day or two old, no bigger than the crow's beak, and its bones appeared visibly undeveloped in the images.

Indian Nightjars, as many of us know, aren't nest-builders in the traditional sense; they lay their eggs directly in small depressions on the ground, often among grass, rocks, or bushes. While we had noted a potential nesting spot nearby, confirming it as ***the*** nest is always difficult without nesting material. Observing their breeding behaviour, especially at the nest site, is exceptionally rare since they are primarily nocturnal.

The crow, it seemed, wasn't yet done. After the first chick, it proceeded to pick up another one, equally tiny and vulnerable, before flying off. The entire incident, from start to finish, unfolded in about five minutes. It left us with a swirl of emotions – a deep sadness for the nightjar parents, yet also that stark realization that this is, indeed, life in the wild. No alarm calls from other birds were heard, our group's collective focus completely riveted by the drama.

White-eyed Buzzard adult

Despite the initial shock, we knew Yenkathala had more to reveal, so we continued our birding for another 30-40 minutes in the area. Our perseverance paid off – we were treated to excellent sightings of White-eyed Buzzards. We watched two flying low, keenly scanning the ground, with another one perching on nearby rocks, clearly on a morning hunt.

White-eyed Buzzard juvenile

Later, we were thrilled to see a juvenile White-eyed Buzzard mirroring its elders, and were even lucky enough to witness it expertly catch and consume a dragonfly right near our vehicle. These raptors are incredibly sensitive, so we were extra cautious not to step out of the car, understanding that any sudden human presence could easily send them soaring away.

Our continued observations added many more species to our trip list. The vibrant Blue-tailed Bee-eaters were striking, with three individuals perched gracefully on a dry tree[2]. A White-browed Bulbul was seen on a mound, also quite unusual. The familiar calls of the Oriental Skylark rang through the air, with two individuals observed, a clear sign of healthy grassland.

White-browed Bulbul

We noted a lone Rufous-tailed Lark, perfectly at home in this dry, open landscape. A well-camouflaged Chestnut-bellied Sandgrouse offered a brief but satisfying glimpse, and a Black Drongo held its prominent perch. Several Grey-breasted Prinias were seen, and even a magnificent Indian Peafowl graced us with its presence, adding a touch of splendour to our morning.

Our eBird checklist for the day captured a rich total of 43 species (+1 other taxa) during our focused observation.

Grey-breasted Prinia

This intense encounter served as a powerful reminder of the vulnerabilities faced by ground-nesting birds in habitats like Yenkathala. With increasing human encroachment, including mining and real estate development, these open/dry grasslands – critical for species like the Indian Courser, Little Ringed Plover, various larks, nightjars, and lapwings – are shrinking. Such disturbances can inadvertently expose nests and young, making them more susceptible to predation.

As Deccan Birders, our mission is to conserve, document, and protect birds. Documentations like this, though difficult to witness, are crucial for maintaining records of such rare behaviours, which are indeed a fundamental part of the life cycle for these birds. More importantly, this experience underscores a vital conservation message for all members: **It is crucial to not drive into open grasslands for birdwatching.** Many species lay their eggs directly in the grass. Hence I would urge everyone to keep vehicles strictly to defined paths and explore other areas on foot, always with keen observation of the ground to avoid disturbing potential nests or eggs. This mindful approach is essential to help protect these vulnerable species in their precious habitats such as Yenkathala.

The list of birds seen during the trip:

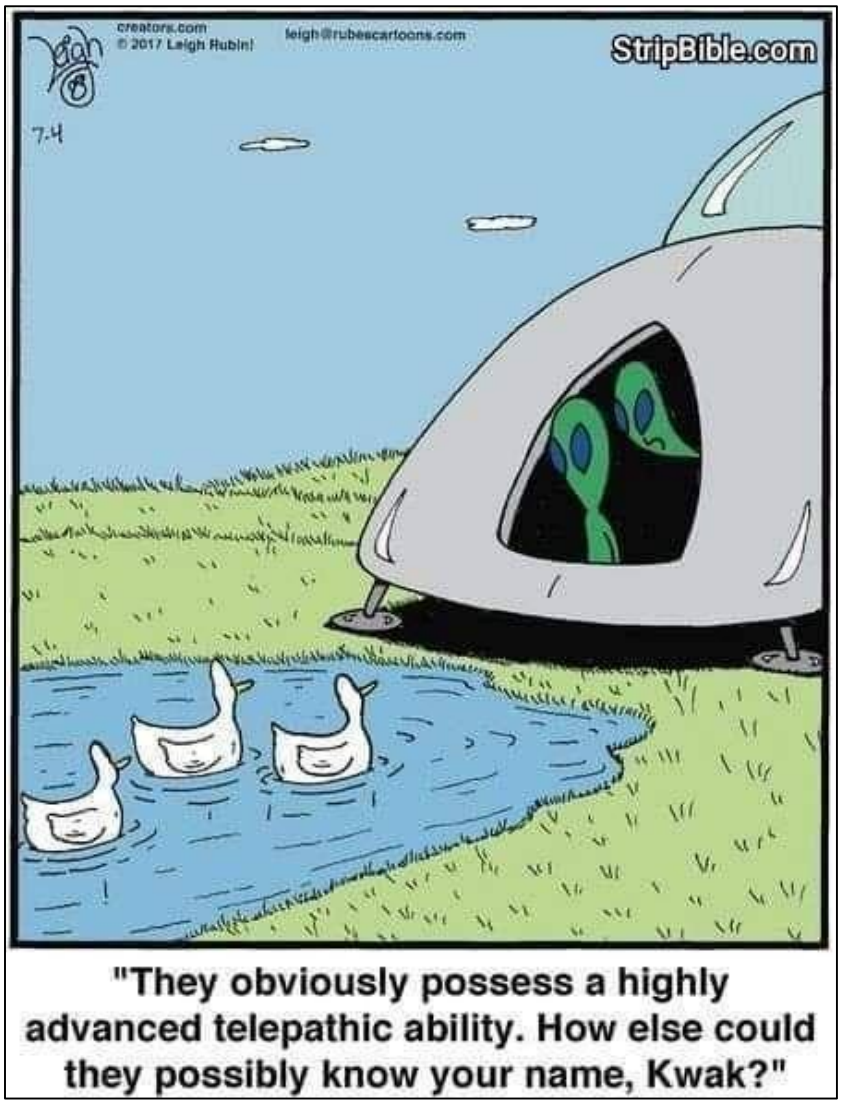
Sl No	Species Name	Scientific Name	Sl No	Species Name	Scientific Name
1	Indian Peafowl	*Pavo cristatus*	16	Eastern Cattle Egret	*Bubulcus coromandus*
2	Rock Pigeon (Feral Pigeon)	*Columba livia domestica*	17	Short-toed Snake Eagle	*Circaetus gallicus*
3	Eurasian Collared Dove	*Streptopelia decaocto*	18	Shikra	*Accipiter badius*
4	Spotted Dove	*Spilopelia chinensis*	19	Brahminy Kite	*Haliastur indus*
5	Laughing Dove	*Spilopelia senegalensis*	20	White-eyed Buzzard	*Butastur teesa*
6	Chestnut-bellied Sandgrouse	*Pterocles exustus*	21	Asian Green Bee-eater	*Merops orientalis*
7	Greater Coucal	*Centropus sinensis*	22	Blue-tailed Bee-eater	*Merops philippinus*
8	Sirkeer Malkoha	*Taccocua leschenaultii*	23	White-throated Kingfisher	*Halcyon smyrnensis*
9	Common Hawk Cuckoo	*Hierococcyx varius*	24	Black-headed Cuckooshrike	*Lalage melanoptera*
10	Indian Nightjar	*Caprimulgus asiaticus*	25	Black Drongo	*Dicrurus macrocercus*
11	Asian Palm Swift	*Cypsiurus balasiensis*	26	House Crow	*Corvus splendens*
12	Yellow-wattled Lapwing	*Vanellus malabaricus*	27	Rufous-tailed Lark	*Ammomanes phoenicura*
13	Red-wattled Lapwing	*Vanellus indicus*	28	Ashy-crowned Sparrowlark	*Eremopterix griseus*
14	Indian Courser	*Cursorius coromandelicus*	29	Oriental Skylark	*Alauda gulgula*
15	Painted Stork	*Mycteria leucocephala*	30	Lark sp.	*Alaudidae sp.*

Sl No	Species Name	Scientific Name	Sl No	Species Name	Scientific Name
31	Grey-breasted Prinia	*Prinia hodgsonii*	38	Large Grey Babbler	*Argya malcolmi*
32	Jungle Prinia	*Prinia sylvatica*	39	Indian Robin	*Copsychus fulicatus*
33	Ashy Prinia	*Prinia socialis*	40	Tickell's Blue Flycatcher	*Cyornis tickelliae*
34	Plain Prinia	*Prinia inornata*	41	Pied Bushchat	*Saxicola caprata*
35	Barn Swallow	*Hirundo rustica*	42	Indian Silverbill	*Euodice malabarica*
36	White-browed Bulbul	*Pycnonotus luteolus*	43	Scaly-breasted Munia	*Lonchura punctulata*
37	Red-vented Bulbul	*Pycnonotus cafer*	44	Tricolored Munia	*Lonchura malacca*

* * *

Bird Humour

Umesh Mani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StripBible.com
7-4
"They obviously possess a highly advanced telepathic ability. How else could they possibly know your name, Kwak?"

(From Facebook, August 19, 2022)

* * *

Deccan Birders - Financial Statements FY 2024-25

BALANCE SHEET AS AT MARCH 31, 2025					
			Note No.	***31-03-2025***	31-03-2024
I	**OWNERS' FUNDS AND LIABILITIES**				
	1.	**Society Funds**			
		Capital Funds	**1**	***22,49,865***	20,79,851
	2.	**Current Liabilities**			
		Other Current Liabilities	**2**	**-**	11,800
			Total	***22,49,865***	20,91,651
II.	**ASSETS**				
	1.	**Non Current Assets**			
		Property, Plant and Equipment	**3**	***3,836***	4,512
	2.	**Current Assets**			
		Inventories	**4**	***57,761***	80,977
		Cash and Bank Balances	**5**	***21,69,210***	19,89,768
		Short Term Loans and Advances	**6**	***12,964***	10,898
		Other Current Assets	**7**	***6,094***	5,495
				22,46,029	20,87,139
			Total	***22,49,865***	20,91,651

Per Our Report of Even Date

For C K S ASSOCIATES LLP
Chartered Accountants
FRN: 007390S/S000218

GADDE SRI DIVYA
Partner
M.No.250806

Hyderabad
September 06, 2025

For and on Behalf of the Executive Committee
DECCAN BIRDERS

JVD Moorty	***Krishna Nagarajan***	***Srikanth B***
Hon President	***Hon Treasurer***	***Hon Secretary***

RECEIPTS AND PAYMENTS ACCOUNT FOR THE YEAR ENDED MARCH 31, 2025						
				Cash	**Canara Bank**	**Total**
1	**Opening Balance**			124	2,89,644	
2	**Receipts during the year**					
	Admission Fee					
	Life Membership Fees				57,000	
	Annual Membership Fees				15,500	
	Student Membership Fees				1,000	
	Interest received from Saving Bank				7,331	
	Interest received-F.D				1,16,074	
	Sale of Caps and T- Shirts			-	27,375	
	Donations				28975	
	Income Tax Refund_AY 2024-25				10,898	
	Income Tax Refund_AY 2023-24				14,327	
	Interest on Income Tax Refund				1,295	
	Cash withdrawal			5,000		
				5,124	**5,69,419**	**-**
3	**Payments during the year**					
	Audit Fees				23,600	
	Bank Charges				298	
	Post Box Charges			150		
	Postage & Courier			972		
	Printing and Stationery			3,450		
	T-shirts and Caps					
	Fixed Deposit - Canara Bank				2,00,000	
	Income Tax					
	Lecture Accommodation					
	Cash Withdrawal				5,000	
	Miscellaneous			-		
	Outstanding Expenses					
	Stipend				9,600	
	Honorarium				12,000	
	Annual Dinner				50,263	
	Website Maintenance				-	
				4,572	**3,00,761**	**-**
4	**Closing Balance**			552	2,68,658.42	-

For C K S ASSOCIATES
Chartered Accountants
FRN: 007390S

For and on behalf of the Executive Committee
DECCAN BIRDERS

V.SRINATH
Partner
M.No.021185

JVD Moorty
Hon President

Krishna Nagarajan
Hon Treasurer

Srikanth B
Hon Secretary

Place: Hyderabad

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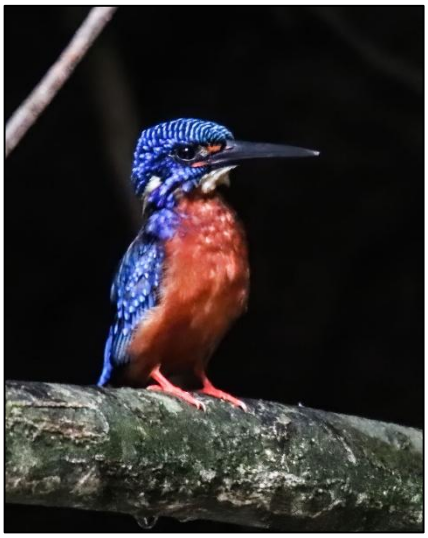
Bird of the Month

Text and Photos: Umesh Mani

Blue-eared Kingfisher (*Alcedo meninting*)



Blue-eared Kingfisher (Thattekad, Kerala, October 02, 2017)

Order:	Coraciiformes
Family:	Alcedinidae
Genus:	*Alcedo*
Species:	*A. meninting*
Size:	17 cm
IUCN Status:	Least Concern

Description & distribution: The Blue-eared Kingfisher is a small kingfisher that is distributed across the Indian subcontinent (Himalayan foothills, North-eastern, Eastern and South-western parts of India), Bangladesh and Sri Lanka, and in many parts of Indochina and south-east Asia. It has the typical short-tailed, large-headed kingfisher structure: dark cobalt blue upperparts, rich rufous underparts, bright orange legs, and a large bill which is all black in the adult male and two-toned (dark upper and reddish lower mandible) in the adult female. It has an orange spot in front of the eye, white ear tufts on the sides of the neck, and a prominent sky-blue 'river' down the centre of the back. It is differentiated from the similar-looking Common Kingfisher by its blue ear patch (which is rufous in Common Kingfisher). Juvenile birds are similar but show a rufous ear patch (like the Common), but can be told apart by the mottling on throat and upper breast. The bill is also reddish with whitish tips. Several subspecies are recognized: The race *A. a. meninting*, seen in the Malay peninsula, Borneo, southern Philippines and some parts of Indonesia, is the nominate; the other subspecies are *A. a. coltarti*, seen in Nepal, north-eastern India, northern Thailand and Indochina; *A. a. phillipsi*, seen in south-western India and Sri Lanka; *A. a. scintillans*, seen in southern Myanmar and Thailand, and *A. a. rufigastra*, seen in the Andaman Islands.

Habitat & behaviour: The Blue-eared Kingfisher prefers dense shaded forests with small streams which form its main hunting grounds; it is also seen around pools and creeks in subtropical or tropical moist lowland forest and mangroves, inland wetlands, permanent or seasonal rivers/streams/creeks; estuaries and plantations. It is usually seen below the altitude of 1,000m. It perches on branches overhanging the forest streams or pools, where it dives to capture its prey. Its diet mainly consists of crustaceans, dragonfly larvae, and fish; it is also known to pick insects, including grasshoppers and mantids. Its flight is fast, direct and low over the water, with the short wings whirring rapidly.

Nesting: The Blue-eared Kingfisher breeds mainly between May and June in northern India and January in south-western India. The nest is usually a one-metre long tunnel in the bank of a forest stream, and the usual clutch consists of 5-7 white, almost spherical eggs.

Local name: The Blue-eared Kingfisher is known as *'Chhota kilkila'* in Hindi, *'Chhota machhera'* in Punjabi, a*'Ponnan kuruvi'* in Tamil, *'Podi ponman'* in Malayalam and *'Neela buchigadu'* in Telugu. (All these names are also applicable to the Common Kingfisher).

* * *

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For information, write to: Deccan Birders, PO Box 45, Banjara Hills, Hyderabad – 500034. **Website:** www.deccanbirders.in. **E-group:** http://groups.google.co.in/group/deccanbirders. **Society membership** (in Rs.): Annual: 500 per annum; Student: 200 per annum; Corporate: 2000 per annum; Life: 3000. (*Add Rs 75 for outstation cheques.)*